



## RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The following is a record of the decisions taken at the meeting of **CABINET** on **11 JULY 2012**.

The decisions will come into force and may be implemented from **23 July 2012** unless the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or its Committees object to any such decision and call it in.

### **Library Strategy** **Key Decision AWH04/11** **MTFP AWH10**

#### **Summary**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director, Adults Wellbeing and Health that sought approval for the Library Service strategy "Inspire Include Inform" following consultation, and to make changes to the operation of the library service in order to realise savings in the Medium Term Financial Plan in respect of the library service. Durham County Council agreed its Medium Term Financial Plan in February 2011, setting out savings to be achieved of more than £123million between 2011 and 2015 including £1,457,000 in respect of library services.

The Council has a statutory duty, under the Public Library and Museums Act (1964), to provide a "comprehensive and efficient library service". The previous Government's policy ("The Modernisation Review of Public Libraries: A Policy Statement" (March 2010)) reaffirmed the statutory requirement to provide a library service and was clear that books, and the right to borrow them and browse free of charge, must remain at the heart of the library service.

The library service in County Durham comprises the following key elements:

- A network of 39 public libraries in town centres and local communities, plus the staff library at County Hall which also serves as the members resource centre. Town centre libraries are those in the major settlements as described in the Council's Sustainable Communities Strategy;
- A stock of over 750,000 books available for loan and 210 computers for free public use;
- The Mobile Library fleet of 5 vehicles, calling at more than 180 settlements throughout the County ;
- "Books on Wheels" for housebound people, delivered by volunteers;
- The "Book Bus", providing a public library service to some care homes, sheltered housing complexes and day care centres.
- The Prison library service (which is fully funded by Central Government) serving four prisons across County Durham; and

- Library Online, a web-based service, whereby library members can renew items they have on loan, check the catalogue and make requests for specific books as well as receiving reminders in respect of loaned items

As at 31 March 2012, there were 290,442 library members, of whom 91,779 are “active borrowers” – i.e. they have borrowed a book in the last 12 months. 1,578 of these active borrowers use the mobile library service. In total in 2011/12 there were 1,970,187 visits to libraries in the county. These visits include individuals coming to borrow books or use the internet, parent and toddler sessions, classes of school children, craft clubs and reading groups.

Detailed information on each library is available in the Library Profiles document that can be referred to in the Members’ library. Each library profile gives an overview as regards opening hours, levels of use, staffing, membership and regular activities and events. NB: This data relates to 2010 - 2011.

The gross library service budget for 2011/12 was £6.191m per annum. The service receives £470,000 in income and the net spend is therefore £5.721m per annum. This income is a combination of fees and charges and funding to provide services on behalf of other organisations (including from central government for the prison library service).

The Council agreed its Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the period 2011-2015 in February 2011. This followed public consultation in 2010 with Area Action Partnerships on relative priorities, where for a number of service areas, including libraries, respondents were asked to indicate whether the Council should apply a standard reduction of 25% over the next 4 years, or whether the level of reduction should be smaller or larger. The responses in respect of libraries showed that 17.9% felt the reduction should be smaller than 25%, 37.9% felt the 25% reduction should apply, but 32.4% felt the reduction should be higher – significantly more than those who felt the service should receive a smaller cut. The Council decided to apply savings of £1,457,000 to its library service between April 2011 and March 2015.

The previous report to Cabinet on 8 February 2012 summarised the savings that had been identified and agreed for the service. These included increasing income targets, reductions to supplies and services budgets, reduction to management costs and reduced hours at Clayport. The plans to realise the remainder of the savings were subject to public consultation and this report focuses on the outcome of that consultation and makes recommendations in order to ensure the achievement of the balance of the savings in the service by the financial year ending March 2015.

The consultation on their future generated a great deal of interest, and showed significant support across the County for the plans to retain all the library buildings. In some communities there was significant opposition to reductions in the level of service.

The consultation also showed strong support for a key role for local communities in the library service in the future, as volunteers, to support activities, to raise funds, and so on.

Given the feedback to the consultation, it was proposed that the following actions would support the library strategy and realise savings as a result of the MTFP:

- to keep open all our library buildings, but reduce the opening hours funded by the Council;
- to revise our criteria for the communities that are served by our mobile library service;
- to co-locate libraries wherever possible with other services and to invest to improve their appearance and facilities;
- to drive down our support and management costs; and
- to move our library services into a not-for-profit Trust (subject to a further report to Cabinet).

In response to consultation the criteria for the communities to be served by mobile libraries would change from those originally proposed to:

- **Distance:** mobile libraries will only call at settlements at least 3 miles from a library building;
- **Standardised halts** for 15 minutes, 30 minutes, one hour or two hours – depending on level of current use;
- **A minimum of one visit every three weeks** to all settlements with weekly visits to some larger settlements
- **Halts would be withdrawn if they are not used in a 6 month period:** in order to ensure the service is efficient and meets needs, the level of use of all halts would be monitored.

The proposed changes to the library service set out how the Council can deliver the savings required whilst maintaining all 39 of its library buildings and continuing to provide a mobile library service to 87 rural settlements. By revising the criteria and reducing the frequency of visits from two-weekly to three-weekly, an additional 15 settlements can retain their mobile service.

Members considered the following issues as they determined whether to adopt the strategy for library services as set out in the February 2012 report to Cabinet:

- The views expressed in 2010/11 in the consultation process on the Council's budget with regard to the level of saving the library service should be subject to;
- The Council's statutory duty to provide a "comprehensive and efficient library service";
- The assessment of the need for library services;
- The views expressed in the consultation exercise on the library strategy including:
  - i. support for the Council to retain its full network of library buildings, and to reduce opening hours rather than close libraries;
  - ii. the petitions and other representations that have been received from a number of communities about their local library;
  - iii. alternative suggestions made during the consultation about opening hours and the savings;
  - iv. the impact on access to services;
- The Equality Impact Assessment
- Responsibilities to staff.

## Decision

The Cabinet:-

- Agreed the actions at paragraph 123 in the report;
- Agreed the Vision set out at paragraph 13, the aims listed at paragraph 14 and the statement of need in Appendix 9 in the report;
- Agreed the criteria for the communities to be served by mobile libraries listed at paragraph 124 in the report;
- Agreed to retain the existing network of 12 town centre and 27 community libraries;
- Agreed to reduce opening hours in town centre libraries (other than Clayport) to 36 hours per week, and in community libraries to 20 per week;
- Agreed that given that from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2012 responsibility for the library service will transfer to the Corporate Director for Neighbourhood Services, to :
  - (i) Delegated to the Corporate Director for Neighbourhood Services responsibility for producing and implementing a plan to make the changes proposed to opening hours and mobile halts, to take effect from 1 January 2013, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder.
  - (ii) Delegated to the Corporate Director for Neighbourhood Services responsibility for monitoring the impact of the changes in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder.

### **Proposed Closure of Plawsworth Road Infant School**

**Key Decision: CYP5/05/12**

#### **Summary**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services that sought approval to close Plawsworth Road Infant School from 31 August 2013.

Consultation on this proposal was carried out from 20 February 2012 to 30 March 2012. After considering the views of those who responded to the consultation a decision was taken to proceed to the next stage in the statutory process which was to issue a public notice proposing the closure of the school from 31 August 2013.

The public notice was issued on 26 April 2012 for 6 weeks, when objections and comments on the proposal could be sent to the Local Authority. No objections or comments were received by the end of the 6 week statutory notice period.

Consultation and the publication of the statutory notice was carried out in accordance with the guidance provided by the Secretary of State on 'Closing a Maintained Mainstream School'. The report provided details of the consultation that was undertaken and a summary of the responses received.

Cabinet considered the effects this proposal could have on standards and school improvement. During the consultation, parents were made aware of the fact that if a

decision was taken to close the school all pupils at Plawsworth Road Infant School could be accommodated in nearby Sacriston Nursery and Infant School. There are also some places available in other local schools

Sacriston Nursery and Infant School is an outstanding school. In light of this, officers believe that this proposal will not have a detrimental effect on standards and school improvement. If the school was to close, pupils will continue to have access to a high standard of education and to a curriculum that will help them achieve their potential. They will also continue to have access to a range of extended services.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs will continue to have their needs met at another school if they were to be displaced as a result of closure of this school. In this locality there is another Infant School, as highlighted above, a Community Primary School and Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic Primary School.

It is important that education is provided as cost-effectively as possible. Empty places can represent a poor use of resources. There are surplus places in the Sacriston area, therefore the closure of Plawsworth Road Infant School will remove some of these surplus places.

Plawsworth Road Infant School is designated by the Department for Education as a rural school. Cabinet had regard to the need to preserve access to a local school in rural communities.

## **Decision**

The Cabinet agreed to close Plawsworth Road Infant School from 31 August 2013.

## **Medium Term Financial Plan (3), Council Plan and Service Plans 2013/14 – 2016/17**

### **Summary**

**The Cabinet considered a joint report of the Corporate Director, Resources and Assistant Chief Executive on the development of the planning frameworks which will enable the Council to develop the 2013/14 Budget, the 2013/14 – 2016/17 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Council Plan/Service Plans.**

The Council's first MTFP was approved for the four year period 2011/12 – 2014/15. The County Council faced a major challenge in setting the 2011/12 budget. After taking into account estimated budget pressures faced, the Council was required to achieve £66.4m of savings in 2011/12 and £123.4m of savings over the whole of the MTFP(1) period 2011/12 to 2014/15. This is the equivalent to 30% of the Council's 2010/11 Net Revenue Expenditure Budget.

To ensure the next MTFP for 2013/14 to 2016/17, Council Plan and Service Plans could be developed effectively, it is important to agree a robust plan and timetable.

At this stage in the process the following key areas were considered:-

- (i) uncertainty in relation to the 2013/14 Financial Settlement for the Council and the relationship in this regard with the major changes associated with the Business Rate Retention (BRR) scheme with effect from 1 April 2013;
- (ii) the impact on the MTFP (3) process of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTSS) with effect from 1 April 2013;
- (iii) options for addressing the £0.86m 2013/14 Budget shortfall where savings had not yet been identified when the 2012/13 – 2015/16 MTFP (2) was agreed by Full Council on 22 February 2012;
- (iv) proposed approach to the Council Plan and Service Plans;
- (v) a draft MTFP (3) /Council Plan timetable;
- (vi) proposed approach for consultation on the MTFP (3) and Council Plan;
- (vii) equality considerations.

## **Decision**

The Cabinet:-

- (i) Noted the broadly balanced budget position forecast at this stage for 2013/14
- (ii) Noted the risks identified in relation to the 2013/14 budget and the mitigating actions for consideration in this regard;
- (iii) Noted the £48m MTFP (3) Model shortfall for the period 2014/15 – 2016/17 and the proposed approach to identifying additional savings
- (iv) Noted the uncertainty in relation to the 2013/14 Finance Settlement. Total clarity in this regard will not be available until the Settlement is received in December 2012;
- (v) Noted the impact and risks of the introduction of the Business Rate Retention scheme;
- (vi) Noted the impact and risks of the introduction of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme;
- (vii) Agreed that the Council respond to the consultation on public health funding.
- (viii) Agreed the outlined approach to consulting on the MTFP (3);

- (ix) Agreed the MTFP (3)/Council Plan Timetable
- (x) Agreed the proposed approach to preparing the Council Plan and Service Plans;
- (xi) Agreed the proposals to build equalities considerations into decision making.

## **2011/12 Final Outturn for General Fund and Housing Revenue Account**

### **Summary**

The Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director, Resources that provided details of the Final Outturn for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2011/12 including an Annual Treasury Management Review.

The County Council faced a major challenge in setting the 2011/12 budget. After taking into account estimated budget pressures faced, the Council was required to achieve £66.4m of savings in 2011/12 and £123.4m of savings over the whole of the MTFP 2011/12 to 2014/15. This is the equivalent of almost 30% of the Council's 2010/11 Net Revenue Expenditure Budget.

Projected outturn figures for the County Council based upon information as at 31 December 2011 were reported to Cabinet on 29 February 2012 and at that time forecasted an increase in Cash Limit Reserves of £1.3m and an addition to General Reserve of £1.7m.

The final outturn for 2011/12 is being determined as part of the production of the Statement of Accounts. During the process of finalising the Statement of Accounts, the Corporate Director Resources will be required to make a number of technical decisions in the best financial interests of the Council. Such decisions will be fully disclosed in the Statement of Accounts.

### **Decision**

1. The Cabinet noted:

- (i) The addition to the Cash Limit reserves of £3.760m in the year. These sums will be held as Earmarked Reserves and be available for Service Groupings to utilise to manage budgets effectively.
- (ii) The closing General Reserve balance of £21.874m.
- (iii) The closing balance on Earmarked Reserves (excluding Cash Limit Reserves) of £84.539m of which £20.890m relate to schools balances.

1. The Cabinet approved:

- (i) That the capital budget carried forward of £32.213m for the General Fund and £1.465m for the HRA is moved into 2012/13 and that Service Groupings regularly review capital profiles throughout 2012/13 reporting revisions to the Member Officer Working Group and Cabinet as necessary.
- (ii) That the power to amend counterparty monetary and time limits is delegated to the Corporate Director Resources. Any changes to the Annual Strategy during the financial year would then be reported to County Council in either the Mid-Year Review or the Final Outturn Report.

## **The County Durham Cycling Strategy and Action Plan 2012-15**

### **Summary**

The Cabinet considered a report of Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development that sought agreement to adopt the Cycling Strategy and Action Plan 2012-15.

The strategy and action plan have been prepared in conjunction with key colleagues within the local authority and cycling groups and partner organisations such as the County Durham Local Access Forum. The draft was developed following research into successful cycling cities across the world and through the feedback from the public consultation on the draft strategy.

The draft strategy was made available on the County Council website for an 8 week public consultation and was emailed to an extensive list of stakeholders. The responses were mainly supportive, with constructive suggestions for amendments. Other comments were on people's experiences and aspirations on cycling in the County. A summary of the comments received was included in the report.

The majority of comments on cycling issues related specifically to Durham City - difficulties getting across the city, secure parking, inadequate signage, the need to educate highway users of their rights, driver behaviour and maintenance of routes were the most common problems encountered.

Where possible and appropriate we have taken on board and incorporated the comments to strengthen specific sections and have redrafted the document to produce this final version.

An Equalities Impact Assessment and Joint Health and Sustainability Impact Assessment have been carried out on the draft plan. Amendments were made to the draft following these processes in the production of the final version. The assessments will be made available on request.

The Cycling Strategy and Action Plan fits within the authority's broader strategic framework and is influenced by the overarching plans and ambitions for the County as set out in the Regeneration Statement, the Local Sustainable Community Strategy, County Durham Plan, Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) and the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.



The key areas of action include;

- Creating a safer and more attractive cycling environment through highway user education and network creation and improvement
- Developing major cycle super routes in and between the 12 main towns
- Installing cycle parking at key location
- Ensuring developments include provision for cyclists
- Auditing, monitoring and recording the cycling network
- Producing cycling maps for the 12 main towns.

Decision

The Cabinet agreed the Cycling Strategy and Action Plan 2012-15.

## **Update on the Review of the CCTV Service Monitored by Care Connect**

### **Summary**

***The Cabinet considered a joint report of Corporate Director, Regeneration and Economic Development, and Corporate Director, Adult Wellbeing and Health that provided an update on the consolidation of the 24/7 CCTV service to the Chilton control room and reported on the outcome of the consultation regarding the future provision of the public realm/strategic cameras monitored by the Authority.***

The public realm CCTV systems had been developed on an ad-hoc arrangement across the former District Councils. At the time of LGR there were control rooms in Durham and Sedgfield (Chilton) Care Connect, two external contracts Genesis (Derwentside) and Darlington Borough Council (for Wear Valley cameras) and Chester-le-Street CCTV which was only partially monitored by DCC staff.

The service was not equitable across the County and had a variety of service models, equipment and contractual arrangements in place.

A multi agency project group was established to provide a countywide strategy for the future delivery and development of the CCTV service. The membership of this group included the Police, Social inclusion and ICT. The group reported to the Community Safety Partnership via the PPG (Performance Planning Group).

Consultants were appointed to carry out site surveys of the cameras and to assess the control room equipment and locations. This provided detailed information on the condition of equipment and existing connectivity.

The consultant's main recommendations were as follows:-

- Monitoring of the County Council's public realm CCTV should be consolidated from five control rooms to one control room (based at Chilton).
- A consultation exercise should be undertaken to identify which cameras are considered to be strategic and which are non strategic.
- A tendering exercise should be undertaken for the provision of a fully comprehensive countywide maintenance contract.

The consolidation of the control rooms, review of the cameras and monitoring arrangements and the provision of a fully comprehensive maintenance contract will result in savings estimated at around £355K and will provide an improved, value for money service for the residents of County Durham.

The access to redeployable cameras for hotspot areas on a countywide basis will improve our response to areas of high crime and antisocial behaviour and should provide a deterrent and increase crime detection.

Any future provision of cameras will be subject to current Home Office Guidance and this provision will be subject to approval of the Community Safety Partnership.

### **Decision**

The Cabinet:-

- Noted the progress on the overall review of the CCTV service.
- Agreed to the list of strategic and non-strategic cameras, along with the recommendation that the non strategic cameras are decommissioned unless the provider of the camera agrees to a charge which will include monitoring, maintenance and connectivity charges associated with each camera.
- Agreed that Home Office guidance is adopted as the policy for the future provision of cameras.

Colette Longbottom  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services  
13 July 2012